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FARM PRODUCTION SUPPLIES---1946

A transcribed talk by Frederic B. Northrup, Director, Materials and Equipment Branch, Production and Marketing Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Recorded August 28, 1945. 6 minutes and 45 seconds without announcer's parts.

TRANSCRIPTION:

NORTHROP: I'm pretty optimistic about farm production supplies for 1946. The best reason is that the industries making these supplies don't have to reconvert. Even though some of the companies have made military goods too, they've kept right on making farm supplies. Many of them have made a greater amount of farm supplies during the war than they were making before the war. For example, the fertilizer manufacturers have been turning out much larger supplies than ever before. And the farm machinery industry has produced a greater total amount of equipment and repair parts for farmers during each of the last two years than during any of the prewar years. Even so, farmers have needed and wanted more than they could get of practically everything. But as materials and labor ease up for the farm supply industries, their output will begin catching up with demand. Practically all of the wartime controls on production and distribution of the things farmers use in their business have been taken off...or are now being taken off.

That's another reason for saying the outlook is pretty good. Most manufacturers can now produce as much and as rapidly as their own labor and material situations permit. Of course, that means they won't have the protection of Government allocations of material and priorities. They'll have to get out and compete for everything they need. And this means some manufacturers will pick up speed faster than others. It's just possible that some might lag behind to such an extent that the farmers' interest and the nation's interest would suffer. For that reason, the Department of Agriculture will keep a few people on watch to see whether all essential farm supplies become available in the amounts needed for adequate farm production. If necessary, we'll seek the cooperation of the War Production Board in breaking bottlenecks.

However, I'm confident that in general the industries can supply the farmers' needs adequately in 1946. That is not a prediction of absolute abundance; some individuals may not be able to get some items they need or would like to buy; but, naturally, I believe we are now witnessing the beginning-of-the-end of troublesome shortages of farm supplies.

Let's run through a brief list of important items. In farm machinery, we can expect a big increase. Manufacturers started a new production year the first of July with a minimum program about 30 percent greater than last year's production. They have plans to do a lot better than that. Most of them have found the going a little slower than they expected, but several of the companies have told me recently that they're now really getting into gear. We no longer have a national production program on machinery, so I don't have any basis for official estimates. But the indications are that by spring and summer manufacturers will be turning out a good deal more machinery than in any previous year.

Included in that will be at least half again as many wheel tractors as in 1945---and probably even more than that. Crawler tractors will be coming on the market faster, now that military needs have been satisfied. Manufacturers say they will continue to turn out very large quantities of repair parts for existing farm machinery.

As to lumber, it looks as if farmers will be able to get most anything they need by the first of the year. The limit on farm construction is likely to be removed before long. Hand tools, wire, fence, and all those miscellaneous things should be not only in free supply but better in quality. On the other hand, galvanized steel sheets for roofing and siding may be in short supply for some time, perhaps until after the first of the year.

The supply of textile bags and fruit and vegetable containers will be tight through the rest of 1945 but should be completely adequate in 1946.

Fertilizer in general will be more abundant in 1946 than in 1945. Plans are being made to keep some of the government nitrogen plants turning out material for sale to the industry. But some forms of nitrogen will be a little bit scarce... ammonium sulphate for example. It looks as if we'll have some more superphosphate than last year and about the same amount of potash---that's a little less potash than the fertilizer industry would like to have. It will still be a good idea for farmers to anticipate their requirements for fertilizer and lay in supplies early.

To kill insects, we'll have an adequate supply of most poisons. For the first time in years, we'll have large amounts of pyrethrum. We'll have about as much rotenone, maybe more than last year. Some DDT will be available---for use with caution. Unfortunately, we'll have less nicotine than last year but there'll be no shortage of arsenicals.

Chemicals needed to wash dairy equipment---detergents and wetting agents---will be hard to get in adequate amounts for some time.

Gasoline, of course, is no longer rationed. Neither are tires for tractors and farm implements. Tires for trucks and passenger cars may continue to be in short supply for a few months.

One of our biggest problems, still, is the need for trucks. There's a big backlog of demand. But the outlook for production is good, and many surplus military trucks are becoming available.

That winds up the report on specific items, but there's one more thing I'd like to say. All through the war years, I've been associated with the Governmental offices whose job it was to get production supplies for farmers and the food industries. We had to make official claims for just about every kind of material you can imagine---billions of dollars worth per year. We never could get as much as we needed and requested because there just wasn't enough. But we did our best, and when that wasn't enough---well, you folks who couldn't get some of the things you needed just buckled down and did your job anyway. My hat's off to you and to the industries that serve you. It's a pleasure to help remove the government controls and to see competitive enterprise take back its initiative. As I said before, the Department of Agriculture will be available to help break bottlenecks if necessary in the next few months. But for the most part, victory in war is bringing victory over farm supply shortages. Good luck to you in the days ahead.

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ANNOUNCER'S OPENING AND CLOSING

OPENING

ANNOUNCER (LIVE):

There's a rainbow in the sky nowadays, and what most of us want to find under it is not a pot of gold but tractors and hay balers and lumber and the other things we've been needing to buy. Now that the war has ended and reconversion has begun, one of the big questions is how much longer do we have to put up with shortages of farm production supplies? What's the outlook for 1946? I've asked Fred Northrup to give us a transcribed report on these questions because he heads up the effort of the U. S. Department of Agriculture to help farmers get the production supplies they need. And here is...Fred Northrup.

CLOSING

ANNOUNCER (LIVE):

In this report on the improving outlook for farm production supplies, you've heard Frederic B. Northrup, who heads the Department of Agriculture office responsible for materials and equipment needed in the government's food production programs.

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